

****ATTENTION****

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SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON'S NEW 3-POINT MULE DEER HUNTING REGULATION

Hunter cooperation and compliance with a new regulation that goes into effect with the 1990 hunting season is needed to protect the future of mule deer herds in southeast Washington.

Only buck mule deer with at least three antler points on one side can be taken in southeast Washington deer hunting units 127 through 185.

The three-point restriction is meant to allow more bucks to survive the hunting season (which runs October 13-21) so that they can breed does during the rutting period which usually peaks in mid-November.

A ratio of about 15 bucks for every 100 does, after the hunting season, is needed for adequate reproduction so that deer populations can remain more stable. But most southeast Washington mule deer herds have declined to less than five bucks per 100 does. By allowing more bucks to survive the hunting season through a three-point restriction, the future of those herds should be more secure.

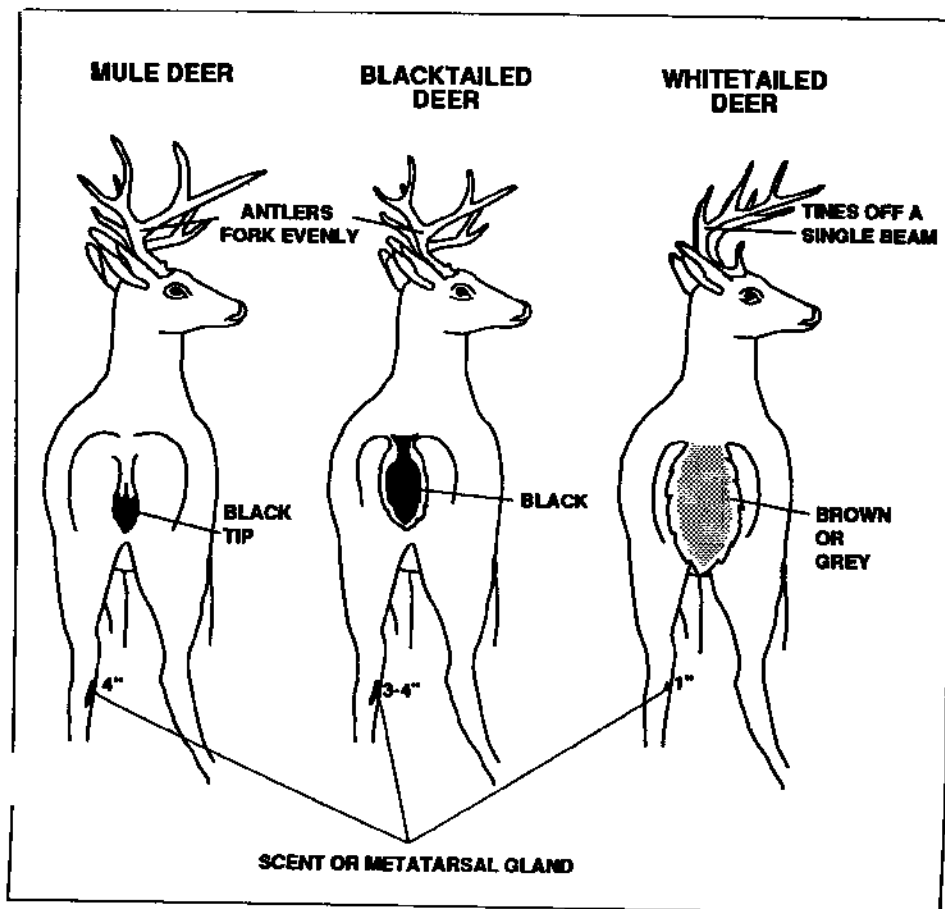
Overall deer populations in southeast Washington are not low now. But if an extended series of droughts or severe winters significantly reduced current numbers, many

herds could not rebuild very easily with such low buck-doe ratios. The warning signs are already flashing: recent drought years have reduced forage for deer, resulting in lower fawn production and in turn, a lower hunter harvest. (Usually about 3,300 mule deer bucks are taken in the 20 southeast units each year; in the last two years, only about 2,800 were taken.)

Under the three-point minimum, hunters this fall will probably take about 400 mule deer bucks. If weather and other conditions are normal, and production improves, that harvest could rebound, under a three-point rule, to about 2,600 by the 1991 season, and back up to 3,300 by 1992. After three years, the regulation will be re-evaluated.

About 800 white-tailed deer bucks are also harvested in the southeast units each year and that should stay the same. Whitetails have not shown the same buck-doe ratio problem as mule deer. The new three-point rule is only for mule deer, so any white-tailed buck is legal to take.

This distinction means that southeast deer hunters must take time and care to clearly identify the species before taking a shot. Identification is best made by the antlers, tail or scent gland; see the diagram on this flyer to understand the differences.



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